

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is *Bereniz Cote Luna*, and I am a MSW student at the University of Connecticut, I am also a current Social Worker working in the city of New Haven working directly with undocumented families and I am from an immigrant undocumented family.

I stand in support of S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

As a child growing up with the privilege of qualifying for Husky health insurance it did not affect me to be able to receive my annual physicals and immunizations however, I was able to observe how it affected my undocumented siblings and parents directly. My parents migrated to the United States 26 years ago to be able to provide my siblings and I with the ability to live the American Dream and worked about 50+ hours a week to not only provide us with our basic needs of food and housing, however, to also be able to afford private health insurance for themselves and for my siblings. Currently, a CT residents can expect to pay an average of \$534 per person a month for a major medical individual health insurance and for most minimum wage working families with an average household of 3. A total of \$1602 a month for health insurance is not realistic. After my father was diagnosed with Thyroid Cancer and his job was closed due to a shift in change in location, he was left without health insurance and was unable to continue to follow up with his medical care. As a result, he was left to pay out of pocket for each specialist visit and medication prescribed. Emergency room visits when he was severely sick with no health insurance were no longer an option and basic visits to his primary care doctor with no health insurance were denied due to the high cost of visits.

As a social worker working directly with undocumented families in the city of New Haven, I have been able to observe the lack of resources for children and their parents who are undocumented in receiving their basic physical health needs. Undocumented parents are paying out of pocket for simple routine dental cleanings and annual yearly physicals required for each school year. Throughout most of my career I have observed how not only this affects the children with severe medical health needs but the parents financially. Yearly, the state of Connecticut also requires for each person completing their taxes to have health insurance to avoid a cost in which cannot be avoided if you cannot afford private health insurance.

This bill will not only help my family but also the community in providing the basic human right of affordable health insurance. To my family and the community this will mean easy access to annual routine physicals and access to affordable specialized doctor visits to ensure they are physically healthy to avoid Emergency Room visits that can be prevented by preventive care.

I support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,
Bereniz Cote Luna